

COMIX WORLD 139. February 1, 1980. c 1980 by Clay Geerdes, Box 7081, Berkeley 94707. All Rights Reserved. Logo by Larry Todd. Subs: \$6 for 24, \$10 for 48. All back issues (some xeroxed) for \$25 pp. Letters welcome. Say your piece.* The Fifth World Tattoo Convention was held this January at the Red Lion Inn in Sacramento and while the attendance was small the event was impressive, particularly to yours truly for whom it was the first. The people in the tattoo community are not as unlike those in the comic community as you might think. Both are eclectic, into a unique form of art, and into justification and legitimization of their scene. For many years, tattoos were bannered roses with "Mom" or some girl's name on them; they were cartoony skulls and daggers on the beefy arms of bikers and longshoremen, the initiation rite forced upon some young sailors and marines by the older, more seasoned, guys. Tattoos were always gotten by those who felt the need to prove themselves to the herd, to conform to a predetermined masculine image. I was stationed on a tanker when I was a sailor back in the early fifties. A guy I'll call JR was always doing crazy things. He was an iron pumper with a nice build and hairless skin. He was really hungry for approval, but his attempts to get it were always backfiring because of the things he did. He made a big deal out of picking up a girl while he was on liberty one night in Oakland where our ship was in drydock. JR showed her panties around the boiler room. Trouble was, he blew it and told everyone she was fifteen years old. That made him a cradle-robber, a guy who could not get a grown woman to make it with him, one who had to resort to seducing teenagers. We shipped out the following week and one of the ports we hit was Hong Kong. So we're laying around the compartment one night and in comes JR. He's looking a little sheepish and not saying much, but he's also got kind of a satisfied look on his kisser, so someone asked him what was up. He was waiting for that and he showed us all a heavily



bandaged chest. JR, who had smoother skin than a surfer boy, had just gotten an enormous golden eagle tattooed all over his chest! Well, he certainly one-upped the engine gang that evening. Carlson had a pair of red lips done on the left cheek of his ass, but that eagle was a show-stopper. My brother has a few tattoos on his arms, but I never got one. Never liked the idea of having anything on my skin that I'd have to look at the rest of my life. I used to draw things on the backs of my hands when I was in grade school and I guess for some of the tattooed people that's the primary impulse toward body embellishment. Like comics, you get the first one, then you get a second, and before you know it, you're really into it. Like the guy from England, George Bohn, who has his entire body covered from the neck down. He's 34, an artist himself, and holds the Guinness record for the most tattooed man in England. Dave Yurkew, the fireman who organized the con and emceed the beauty contest, said they had a great time with George when they were in England. He dropped his pants to show his tattoos and a woman who wasn't with the convention dropped her lower jaw in shock and they thought oh, oh, what's going to happen now because here they were in England and they didn't know whether it was against the law or what, but she just went out and got a friend who came in and looked, too; so pretty soon everyone was dropping their pants to show their tattoos and having a great time. That's more or less what was going on at this con. About 20 men and women were in the beauty contest and when that was over people just stood around in small groups and visited. They came from all over, New Zealand, England, Australia and Texas. Some of the older tattoo artists had been doing their work for as long as 59 years. LeeRoy Minugh (an ~~G~~ from Muskogee) had one of his proteges in the contest, a man who was an executive at Hughes Aircraft in Southern California. He had been working on this man for 20 years. In his business suit, he looked like a conservative member of the board of directors, but when he took off his clothes most of his body was covered. I could just see him picking up a woman in a bar and going to a motel and her seeing all that artwork for the first time! Elizabeth walked down the runway and showed everyone her body. Now that may

not seem unusual in this age of topless dancers and bald-headed space queens, but this lady is 76 years old! She got her first tattoos back in the late forties at the request of her husband. The idea of having a tattooed wife turned him on so she did it. A young German woman, a field engineer from Alaska, got her hips tattooed a couple of years ago. I said I thought that must have hurt, all that soft skin, but she said it wasn't bad and only took a week and a half to heal. Most of the press asked questions about pain, because that is what comes first to untattooed people. LeeRoy Minugh has his name on the inside of his lower lip. He said after the needle went in to make the first letter, the L, his mouth went numb and he didn't feel anything after that. Greg Irons, who told me about watching a guy get his back done on Saturday, said the guy was talking and joking with friends at first but later he was just hunched into himself not saying anything to anyone. One of the more famous guests was the tattooed lady from Australia, Beth Robinson, who wrote "The Story of a Tattooed Girl" in 1962 (O.P., they say). That's her in the lower right hand corner. It was a mixed crowd, to be sure. To avoid gang trouble, Yurkew had ruled that no bikers wear their colors on the convention floor, but it was still easy to tell who was who from biker to businessman. A lecturing prof who ran down the history of tattoo from Africa and Asia requested that "the psychologists and other probers of the human psyche go back in their holes and stop defaming a group of people who carry around a layer of pigment under their skins instead of on it." He was bugged that the Who's Who in Art didn't mention tattoo artists; well, it ignores comic artists, too (and Who's Who is a hustle anyway--you buy your entry & pay for the book; an ego trip for people who are insecure in their fame). I saw a lot of fine tattoo work. Liked the news ones done by Ed Hardy. Trend for some of the more ambitious total body tattoos seems to be the Japanese style. One thing is sure; tattoos are as far from the early hearts and skulls trips as comics are from that primitive stuff in the early issues of ACTION COMICS. -CLAY GEERDES 1/80



LETTERS

"You asked what we'd like to see in the undergrounds in the coming year: Here's my 2¢: more personal books like *American Splendor* and *Honkytonk Sue* reflecting personal, unique points of view of a single creator (artist or writer). Also a wide variety of books in a wide variety of styles. I see no need for the "bandwagon" approach to comics (sci-fi last year, relevant books today, historical books next year). There is--or should be--room for an awfully great range of subject matter & writing/art style in the comic field at the same time.

"Things I'd like to see less of: dope oriented comic (they bore me to tears personally), Science-fiction comic & magazines (enuff! already! Too much of a good thing) & surrealistic comic (again, this is highly personal--but I prefer comics that can communicate on a fairly direct level; i. e., a comprehensible plot, pacing & real emotional involvement.) Books I've particularly enjoyed in the past year--*Honkytonk Sue*, *American Splendor*, *Banza!*, *Griffith Observatory* (I used to hate his work, too. I don't know whether I'm losing my taste or whether he's getting better. Both, no doubt!) *Elquest*, *The Spirit*, *Kurtzman Komix*, *Corporate Crime 2*, *Animal Bite*, and the *Jaxon* trilogy... I agree with Tim Boxell--I would like to find out what's happening with the artists' private lives (within reason). To me, if Bob Crumb marries Aline K., that's news that I'm curious about & it deserves more space than a newspaper reprint (although I realize the reprint is easier)." -MICHAEL T. GILBERT

On the reprints: I put them in so they will be a part of the historical trip I'm on re comics in general. A lot of people collect the newsletters in a binder and while I am most responsive to contemporary comic trends--ugs, Newave, foreign--I like to treat comic art history as a continuum, hence the relevant news clippings. -CLAY GEERDES

"Sadly enough, the ugs mirror as much of America's current listlessness and inertia as any other form of contemporary expression. If the ugs have lost a lot of their punch and verve, so, too, have the 70s. Our only redeeming hope is that out of the flames of the Phoenix, a few titles recently published shine brighter than all other previous

titles. Certainly items like *Comanche Moon*, *American Splendor*, *Thoroughly Ripped*, and *Fog City* will take you higher than a lot of the items we thought so much of in '72. I miss the shit out of Jimi Hendrix, but I'm glad to be alive to hear Pat Metheny, too." -BRUCE SWEENEY

Must admit, I was somewhat stung by your recent rant against "facts" and "the history and educational comic trip," which, for obvious reasons, I feel was totally off base.

But then what do we make of this? Elsewhere in the same CW, you commend Jaxon's "impressive achievements," and on the flip side you hint that the "Slow Death" artists might take a more "positive direction." Flipping back, we find, "I don't want comic that tell me anything or teach me the way.

Hard to know what you think. Er--you do think, don't you?

Personally, I think despair and futility are perfectly appropriate for *Slow Death* and have characterized the series from the beginning. And give *Anarchy* a break. What about that nice "Archie" parody?

-LARRY GONICK

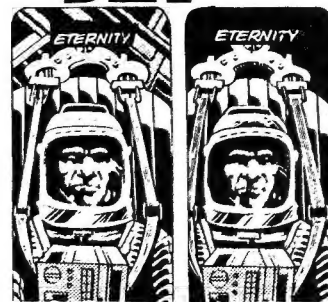
Roldo writes from Winnipeg up in Canada that there will be a second ish of *POLAR FUNNIES*. Jack D. Zastre was inspired to do a #2 when he heard from Sweeney that #1 was going for \$80 among collectors. "Jack's doing a short 'Canine the Barbarian' tale, as well as a 100 per-fucking-cent lovely cover painting (Jack is really brilliant with air brush and colour). Laurence Leeson is doing an oil back cover and story. Jack's teaming with Kenny Moran for a *Strange Tale*, Basil Hatte has tossed in 'Nothing is Permanent' and I'm doing 'The Hilltop Horror.' Roldo sent me a photo to show how snowed in the guys are up in his neck of the woods. Art marches on. Roldo has done a valentine *BABYFAT* cover. Now all we need out of you guys is some inside panels--any weird news in your neighborhood?

WHAT UNDERGROUND PRICE GUIDE?

The following is from a letter by Jay Kennedy: "Underground collecting is just beginning to catch on and someday there will be 50 hardcore collectors all trying to find copies of the 100 print run comic. Will they pay \$25 for say *WINDY CITY* #1? Or will people be forced to collect only those items which are done by people whose work they enjoy? Most of the big collectors I know feel that there will be more people collecting ug comic in the future and that the prices will go up. Most of them speculate, too, by stashing away duplicates of key comic. You wouldn't believe how many Plymell Zap is there really are. It's hard to say what the future will bring for the hobby of ug collecting, but I do think it will pick up. I don't really want a price guide as I think it would be inflationary. The only advantage I can see is that a price guide would give insurance companies something to appraise comic by so we could purchase insurance against fire and water damage. The companies use *Overstreet's Guide* for this purpose, but won't insure ug comic because they can't appraise them." -dtd Jan 12, 1980

True, an ug guide will inflate the comic as the *Overstreet* did the ogs, but I think it is inevitable that someone will do one in the next year or two. It is likely in the works already and someone will just spring it on us like the *Estren* "history." As for this pricing game, well, I see a lot of asking pcs, but I don't see those books selling. Jerry Weist and Mark Von Arn, for example, dealt in San Diego in 1979, but I

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think they spent more money than they made.

The last comic of 1979? That would be *Looking Ahead, Dropping Dead*. Richard Wayne printed up 300 of these minis about 5:30, Dec. 31, 1979. There is a limit of two per order and you get them from Rich at 22262 Chatsford, Southfield, MI 48034. 50¢ and a stamp ea.

Melinda Gebbie has a new painting "I can't do anything" in a show at the Soma Gallery in San Francisco, 2795 16th Street, this month. Gebbie's most recent comic work appeared in *SLOW DEATH* 10. She was featured in *COMIX WORLD* 53.

OVERLOAD you get for \$1.35 from Don Chin, 1951 Quaker, Eureka, CA 95501. It's 8 1/2 x 11, white vellum cover, book paper guts, 24 pp in all. Don calls it a fantasy humor mag. I think ug collectors will want a copy. I enjoyed it.

THE PORTFOLIO OF UNDERGROUND ART should be ready soon. Published as part of Pacific Comics' series, this folio was coordinated by David Scroggy and will feature a cover by Rick Griffin. Drawings by Spain, Jaxon, Larry Todd, Gary Hallgren, Guy Colwell, Robert Williams, Greg Irons, Rand Holmes, and Dan O'Neill. The first edition will include 1200 copies and sell for approximately \$30. Further info from Pacific Comics, P. O. Box 99217, San Diego, CA 92109.

THE TANDRA COLLECTION covers material from 1973-79. Lovely pen work in this fantasy "110-epic." \$1.55pp from Hanthercraft Publications P. O. Box 709, Corinth, Mississippi 38834.

There are now 26 comic in the *COMIX WORLD* MINI-SERIES that began in 1978. The latest is my own *FUNNY LAW*, a mini-comic that takes on the legal profession and it's eccentricities. I can use artwork for upcoming issues of *BABYFAT* so if you're up for an assignment, drop me a postcard this week.

I'll have a table at The Comic Book Swap Meet, Finnish Hall, 1819 Tenth Street, Berkeley, CA, on Sun. January 27 (10-3). Info from Joey Girouard, 134 Michele Drive, San Pablo, CA 94806. 415-223-0338.

-CLAY GEERDES 1-16-80

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